

Consciousness and the Embodied Mind

Phenomenology, Cognitive Therapy and the Satipatthana Sutta

Notes from a talk by Mahabodhi
at National Order weekend, Padmaloka - May 2007

open to all

Introduction

Why am I giving this talk? To clarify for myself, and for you, the various teachings and approaches to mindfulness. When I think, and talk, about mindfulness I want to feel I am on solid foundations, on safe ground (the working title for my book on this topic). And the only way of achieving this is to think, and talk, about it, which is what I have been doing writing my book, and am doing here. I am centring this talk on the four foundations of mindfulness. But I also will cover Bhante's dimensions of awareness, Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy, and theoretical developments concerning mindfulness, in fields such as cognitive science who are tackling the notions of embodiment (and using the discipline of phenomenology). I have experience of practicing mindfulness within the FWBO, at a Thai temple, on a Breathworks course, as well as having experience of traditional cognitive therapy, and I want in some way to bring that experience in too.

But first an aside. I want to go into what has been publicly said about Bhante's 'dimensions of awareness' and their relation to the four foundations of mindfulness. In the 1985 Noble Eightfold Path seminar, Anandajyoti asked a question how the 'dimensions' fitted with the four satipaththanas. Bhante said that the dimensions were more comprehensive, that they included the satipaththanas. He went on to say that two 'new elements' he had included were *awareness of other people* and *awareness of one's environment and nature*. He said -

'there are many passages in the Pali Canon which go to show that those forms of mindfulness , though not actually enumerated in the formula, were certainly not to be neglected' That 'monks were not allowed to travel in the rainy season because they might tread on crops. And that we can hardly behave ethically towards other people unless we are aware of them as sentient beings'. 'It is not that the four foundations are excluded, it's more that they are incorporated into a more comprehensive, albeit not as a formulation, traditional formulation.' - NEP seminar 1985 p72

When Bhante gave the Noble Eightfold Path lecture series I imagine he probably had good reasons to emphasise these 'dimensions'. Teaching the four satipaththanas 'straight' might have led to westerners taking a satipaththana like feeling as permission to be subjective, but placing feeling within the umbrella of awareness of Self might lead them to be more objective. This is just speculation. I haven't had time to ask Bhante himself. His dimensions of awareness -Things, Self, Others, and Reality are 'object-like'! Another point is that the objects of mindfulness need to be easy to grasp, and it is clearer what awareness of Others means than its equivalent in the Satipatthana Sutta - 'the monk contemplates the mind in the mind', even though both represent the ethical dimension (see Fig.1).

The FWBO is ecumenical, which means we look at teachings in the context of drawing on the whole buddhist tradition. The spirit of the 'dimensions' is closer to the Mahayana. We could see the 'dimensions' as the broad brush-strokes of awareness, and the satipaththanas as the details, that may bear closer relevant to meditation for instance. One person I asked thought the 'dimensions' might be 'the satipaththanas for busy people'. If so do they sanction that oft-quoted complaint in the FWBO - busy-ness? The three short Theravada retreats I have been on have met a need for quietness more than various FWBO retreats I have been on. I have appreciated a less discursive, more body-based, with long hours of slow walking meditation alternating with sitting (from 5.30am to 9pm), but that's just my preference. Having said that we have things they don't have.

What I have done is to research Pali sources and Theravada commentaries on the Satipatthana Sutta, to try to make sense of the satipaththanas as a system. My aim has been to try to draw out the essence of what the buddha is getting at. The Theravada commentaries focus on a lot of detail, but I'm not sure they haven't to some degree missed the wood for the trees. Or, looking at the commentaries I feel I can see some of the wood, but not all of it! I am trying to see the rest of the wood!

In the talk I am going to cover - the Satipatthana Sutta and the four foundations of mindfulness, what contemplation means in that context, how the foundations are 'working perspectives' we need to maintain both individually, and harmoniously as a whole. I will introduce cognitive therapy and compare that with the dharmic perspective, make a few comments on recent ideas on embodiment from cognitive science, and finish with a few questions to take forward. I am aware that this talk probably has a lot of material to digest in one go, so if you find that you could come back to it over a number of sessions. Use it as a touchstone for reflection. I may not go into everything here in the talk itself. But I wanted to include it all here as it forms part of a 'whole'.

The main point I make in the talk is that is the full and continuous practice of the satipatthanas is 'the bigger picture', and everything can be fitted into that. It is the context from which we can see limitations in others fields (which by definition do not fully address the human condition because they are 'partial'), ie. problems arise for humanity if it practices anything less than the four satipatthanas. For instance science doesn't cover the four satipatthanas. Philosophy doesn't. Professionalism doesn't. Theistic religion doesn't. (Cognitive therapy wants to but perhaps can't quite). Only buddhism does. So let's look at them.

Part 1 The Four Foundations of Mindfulness

The Satipatthana Sutta

In the Satipatthana Sutta the Buddha says the only way for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering, for reaching Nibbana, is the practice of the four foundations of mindfulness. The monk -

'lives contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome, in this world, covetousness and grief; he lives contemplating feelings in feelings, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome, in this world, covetousness and grief; he lives contemplating consciousness in consciousness, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome, in this world, covetousness and grief; he lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome, in this world, covetousness and grief.'

Satipatthana

Sati means awareness or mindfulness, and *upatthana* means 'to place near'. A satipatthana then is something we *place our awareness near*. More specifically it is a satipatthana *during the times* we place our attention near (whatever the object is). At all other times it is a *satipatthana in potential*. So when my awareness is there with my bodily experience, body is a satipatthana, I am seeing from the frame of reference (another phrase for satipatthana) of the body. A satipatthana is a perspective *from* a particular place. We have then to be *in a particular place* to see it.

The Satipatthana Sutta is divided into four sections, one for each satipatthana. Beginning with body, the Buddha takes the practitioner through how to be aware of that satipatthana. He uses a recurring phrase with each -

'The monk lives contemplating the body in the body (or sometimes the body in and of itself)',
bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassi viharati. Then -

'The monk lives contemplating the feelings in the feelings',
bhikkhu vedana vedanānupassi viharati. Then -

'The monk lives contemplating the consciousness in the consciousness' ,
bhikkhu citta cittānupassi viharati. Then -

'The monk lives contemplating the mental objects in the mental objects' ,
bhikkhu dhammesua dhammānupassi viharati.

Notice the repetition of the object of contemplation. 'The monk - *bhikkhu*, lives, inhabits - *viharati*, (a *vihara* is a dwelling place), seeing - *-passi*, the body - *kāye*, along with it, in accordance with it being - *-ānu-*, a body - *kāya*.

Contemplation is a common rendition of seeing-along-with, or seeing-in-accordance-with, *ānupassi*. So the phrase can be translated as 'The monk inhabits the body seeing it in accordance with it being a body'. - likewise with feelings: 'seeing feelings in accordance with them being feelings' and so on. We bring our awareness close to something (for it to be a satipatthana) but that awareness has a certain quality that *is in accordance with what we are looking at*.

We aren't observing the satipatthanas from just one perspective. With the four satipatthanas there are four perspectives: a body perspective, a feeling perspective, a perspective of consciousness, and a perspective of assessment. These independent working perspectives are summarised in Fig.1.

It is like seeing an image through a coloured filter. When we look at a multi-coloured image through a red filter, the filter extracts the red part of the light coming from the object and we only see that. The other colours are stopped. When we look from the body's frame of reference at experience, we extract the bodily part of our experience and just see that.

When we look at our experience from the feeling frame of reference, we filter everything out except what we feel (a different colour filter to the bodily one, say blue). The third satipatthana filters everything but our state of mind. The fourth everything but our assessments of things.

Or, we might think of the satipatthanas as 'eyes' that are constructed differently, to see different things. The body 'eye' sees just the bodily, the tangible. The feeling 'eye' sees

just the hedonic quality of our experience, and so on. Our experience remains in full colour, but each satipatthana selects a different colour within that. The point being it is important to know independently what is happening from each of these perspectives.

Experience and Response

For a start we need to know what we are experiencing or we won't know how to respond to it. We won't know *what* we are responding to. But our response we also need to know because it has consequences for our future experience.

Body is one type of experience. The sensations we experience are a given. I am seeing the body satipatthana as awareness of what is *tangible* (*touch*-able) in our experience - what is actually there over what is imagined to be there. We approach it through mindfulness of the breath *in the present moment*.

Feeling too is a given. It is about what we are actually feeling not what we want to feel. Body and feeling are *vipakas* (*vedana* is known as a one from the Wheel of Life - part of the 'result process of the present life').

Citta and dhammas are two types of response - how we respond emotionally and psychically (the shape our mind takes in response to a stimulus) and how we frame a response cognitively. The emotive and the rational.

Each of these 'facets' has a particular use, each an integral part of a person. We need to be clear what they are - what is a feeling and what is a thought for instance. To be clear which satipatthana we are dealing with at any time. To not mix them up. Otherwise we will be in the 'wrong place' to deal with it.

It is also worth noting that the satipathanas come in a particular order in the Satipatthana Sutta no doubt for a reason. They begin with experience and end in response. Perhaps unless we are grounded first in personal experience, our response to is likely to lack empathy for personal experience (as in the Buddha's 'idealistic' ascetic phase).

Contemplation

The word contemplation is used in the 'satipatthana phrase', let's look at its meaning in the divctionary. Its latin root is *contemplari*, which means 'to mark out carefully a temple or place for auguries'.

Whoever builds a temple is creating a shrine to a view about what is real for them. So in contemplating the body one is implying 'the body is important, I am going to create space for it'. Or 'feelings are important, I am going to listen to them'. A temple is an extension of a principle - that what we value we adorn and give space to. The buddha suggests then we give space to these four things (four values) - the value of ones tangible experience (body), the value of ones feelings, the value of the quality of ones state of mind and the value of correct assessment of ones perceptions. Four 'temples' to give space to and contemplate. So contemplation in this sense is 'marking out a space where we can take hold of what we think is relevant and important to us'.

Conditions for the Future

The other theme in the definition of *contemplari* is augury (the practice of telling the future, as was done in the classical world by heeding the patterns of birds flight (there are many examples in the *Odyssey*). A 'good' pattern is auspicious, 'augurs well'. This is superstition. But we can have 'rational' augury as well, by looking at patterns in our own experience. When we look at what the future might be given our experience or given our mental states or views.

We contemplate the future in the context of what our belief system is (whether it is providence or experience). Belief systems are always *about* the future. A belief system is about what provides our future. (eg. karma and rebirth) And being 'mindful' of it we believe will safeguard our future. In buddhism we turn that mindfulness towards our experience.

The difference between buddhist contemplation and superstition is - with superstition (like when we cross our fingers) we *hope* for the best, often out of fear. With buddhism it is more that we (at times) courageously move our awareness *into* our experience and *look* for the best. We 'honour our experience with awareness to ensure the best outcome'. The teaching of the buddha puts the future firmly into our hands. In a buddhist temple we don't wait for outside intervention, we get on with meditating and reflecting on our experience. We build up our future through that. The satipathanas represent our future.

Body auspices

A good auspice when applied to the body might be a feeling of physical wellbeing (manifesting as chi). On the other hand, tension announces itself as a bad augur. From viewpoint of the body, tension in the present moment is a bad augur for its future experience of the body. But only by contemplating the body (in accordance with the body) will we see that as an augur, and then do something about it. Hence contemplation of the body will tend to lead to a better bodily experience in the future (assuming we act on it). When one sits in meditation, sometimes the body can just correct itself. It straightens up of its own accord. Sometimes, unconscious to the person, the posture naturally adjusts itself to a 'better future', a more sustainable and balanced position. The same process applies with each satipatthana. What is auspicious in a feeling is it motivates us. What is

auspicious in a mental state is it leads to happy consequences. And what is auspicious in a view is it turns out to be the truth.

By neglecting any of these we neglect one future. And that future suffers. But if we keep a balance going in the development of the satipathanas, we end up with supportive conditions across the board for ourselves. Perhaps the dhyanas are such harmonious development - an example of 'non-violent cooperation' between the different aspects of our being.

Fig.1 The Four 'Working Perspectives'

Body

The tangible in our experience. *Kaya* is like the tangible (that which we can touch) aspect of *rupa* - 'the objective constituent of the perceptual situation'. Tangible form only exists in the present moment. In this satipathana we stay objectively with what is tangible in our experience in the present moment (the only place the tangible can be experienced), which puts us 'on safe ground' because we are responding to the actual not the imagined situation.

When a Zen monk in black robes walks slowly down a gravel path practicing walking meditation, he is practicing being in touch with his experience. He feels the tangible experience of his body: the rocks pressing up through his sandals, his robes fluttering around him in the breeze. He is deliberately sensing whatever is tangible to him. He moves slowly. Moving slowly helps him sense the tangible because it cuts down the amount of input coming in. He can sink into the experience of his body, and come into a closer relationship with the world around him.

There are other ways we can contact the tangible. Anything tangible can centre or ground us. A frail elderly person may experience groundedness when around a family they have created: tangible evidence of the effect their life has had. For a buddhist the sangha are grounding, being ethical is grounding. Seeing tangible positive results of our actions helps us feel safer. We feel safe when we know we can rely on the three jewels. These bring *samatha* - calm, stability, reassurance, a firm foundation to build our lives upon. The words *touch* and *body* have other meanings: *body* of knowledge, we feel *touched* when given kind attention, perhaps because we know someone is sensitive to the *reality of how we are*, are *in touch* with how we are feeling.

By setting up an object of mindfulness in front of us (eg. the breath) we are able to stay in the present moment, and because we are focussed on the detail in the object, our awareness has to be broad and relaxed towards whatever else is in our experience (the other satipathanas). It stops us honing into them in too narrow a way.

Associated Spiritual Faculty: Concentration

Feeling

Sensitivity / sensibility. Living beings are *sensible* to feeling. They are *capable of being affected*. They are *sentient*.

We feel because we have sensitivity, and no doubt we have that for a reason. Without it we wouldn't feel anything. The word *sensible* is interesting because it has two meanings that are closely linked. It means *capable of being affected*. It also means *capable of being perceived by the senses or mind*, also delicate, intelligent, marked by sense, cognisant, aware, appreciable, and sensitive. We use it as in *sensibility*, which is *capacity of feeling, actual feeling, or susceptibility*. The visual artist's sensibility manifests in their being sensitive to combinations of shape, colour and texture, and emotions arising on the back of those. They are *sens-ible* to feelings arising via the visual sense. The other use of *sensible* is more about intelligence (but still related to feeling). For a child, riding their bike on the pavement might not be the most sensible thing to do, because there is a chance someone might get hurt (which they will feel through their *senses*). *Sensible* in both cases relates to pleasure and pain, to sensitivity in receiving it, or to causing it.

If *sensibility* is the capacity to be sensitive to pleasure and pain, it is the *sentient* that feel it (they '*have the faculty of perception and sensation*'). As a sentient being we can be sensitive to three types of feeling. All sentient beings are sensitive to physical pleasure and pain (*kayika vedana*). If we are sensitive to that in them (which is an ethical sensitivity - 'spiritual' feeling or *niramisa vedana*) we would not want to cause them suffering. If we are not sensitive and instead motivated by greed, hatred or delusion, we act on the 'worldly' feelings (*samisa vedana*) that come up - like the pain of unmet desires, or the pleasure of inflicting pain (on your enemy). We are in that case sensitive to and act on those. The third set of feelings are those we experience as mood (mental feelings - *cetasika vedana*). They come because we are sensitive to 'how things are going', and we experience them to the extent we are not enlightened. The enlightened don't have a preference as to how things should go (their views are conditioned by the *apranihita samadhi* - the 'unbiased') so they don't have moods as such. But we do, because our experiences are out of line with our expectations.

So we need to try to minimise *kayika vedana* in sentient beings, if we can. We need to be sensitive to *niramisa vedana* because it guides us into skilful action, we need to acknowledge *samisa vedana* but not act on it, and we need to loosen up our expectations (ie. gain insight) to gradually eliminate *cetasika vedana*. For sentient beings, feeling is a given they cannot escape. It is the capacity to feel that distinguishes living beings from inert matter, so we have to deal with it.

Niramisa vedana is probably the 'fuel' behind *viria*, as feeling is the great motivator and *viria* the great motivation.

Associated Spiritual Faculty: Energy in Pursuit of the Good

Heart / State of Mind/ Attitude

The ethical and psychic response to experience. Essentially ones karmic response.

Guenther translates *citta* as attitude, which is good in that it points to the response we bring to any situation - eg. a positive attitude / an attitude of boredom, etc. The word attitude is related to those of disposition and posture. Ones attitude one could see it as the posture one 'psychically strikes' (the 'general shape' of ones psyche) in response to a situation (or ones state of mind towards life in general). Ones disposition. The PTS dictionary gives the meaning as heart -

"The meaning of *citta* is best understood when explaining it with expressions familiar to us, as: with all my heart; heart and soul... all which emphasize the emotional and conative side of "thought" more than its mental and rational side (for which see *manas* and *vinnana*)"

I think *citta* has two dimensions: an '*attitudinal*' dimension (heart / emotion / disposition) and a '*consciousness*' dimension (eg. whether one is concentrated or unconcentrated), which perhaps *excludes the contents* of cognition (which belong to *manas* - the mind sense, and are *dhammas* - mental objects). One can have a friendly attitude ('*attitudinal*') that covers a greater or lesser sphere of concern ('*consciousness*') - eg. one can be friendly to ones neighbour (lesser) but also to the whole world (greater). These two dimensions can be distilled down to loving kindness (*metta*) and consciousness or awareness (*sati*), with their opposites, and at a higher level there the third dimension, of insight, that is the *bodhicitta*.

Associated Spiritual Faculty: Faith

Mental objects / Mental concomitants

How the mind sense (*Manas*) 'grasps' the world. Conceptual and symbolic (including images) assessments of meaning.

Mrs Rhys Davids (Buddhist Psychology p19) remarks how 'the commentators connect *mano* with *minati* (*ma*), to measure'. It seems *Manas* measures, assesses. It takes phenomena perceived (in the senses) by *vinnana* and sees them as mental objects (*dhammas*). Raw sensory data in *vinnana* becomes in *Manas* the abstract concept, as in 'chair'. It also forms ideas about the whole, about reality itself. These may be held in the form of images and symbols. *Manas* basically forms views about phenomena (*dhammas*) and these views are more or less correct. The practitioner in the Satipatthana Sutta contemplates mental objects (in mental objects).

'bhikkhu dhammesu dhammanupassini viharati'

- they reflect on the truth (*dhamma*) of those views / concepts / images. Mental objects may be reflected on in a mundane way - 'Shall I have cornflakes this morning?', or more profoundly - "What is the meaning of life?" And views need not necessarily be active conscious choices. They can be, and most often are, unconscious and so unconsidered. We may never think about something which may also be a view about it (that it is not important). Often our reflections constellate around ourselves - 'I am a (____) person', 'the world is (____)'. This interpretation resonates with Bhante's Mindfulness of Reality. We could translate the above as -

*'the monk dwells contemplating the truth (*dhamma*) in his views concerning mental objects (*dhammas*)'*

... and it becomes a reflection on the nature of reality.

Associated Spiritual Faculty: Wisdom

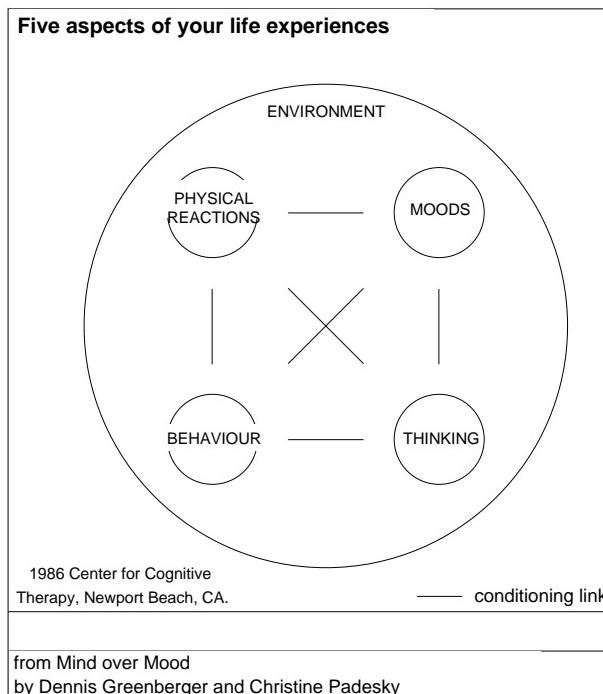
Part 2 Mindfulness and the Cognitive Perspective

I've said something about the satipatthanas. I now want to look at cognitive therapy, which is becoming better known in the movement through Breathworks' pain management work. Apologies in advance if I misrepresent anything. This is solely my understanding of it.

Cognitive Therapy

Let's say cognitive therapy is psychology that deals more with the conscious and observable elements in a person, rather than the unconscious and unobservable. It was founded in the 1970s by Aaron Beck and came out of behaviourism. One of its main tools is something called the cognitive model, which lays out the interrelationships between various 'aspects of life experience' (see Fig.2) This is the 'cognitive perspective'. I was curious that the 'elements' looked a bit like the satipatthanas, and the model a 'web' of conditionality so last year I wrote to Christine Padesky, co-author of Mind Over Mood, the cognitive therapy workbook where the model appears, and asked her where it had come from, if it had been inspired by buddhism. She said it hadn't come from buddhism, but from the clinical experience of her and her colleague, Kathleen Mooney -

Fig. 2 The Cognitive Model



"We developed it from our understanding of cognitive therapy blended with our view that human experience is always interactive with the environments in which we live. Today we would refer to it as a biopsychosocial model for understanding human experience. Its strength for use in therapy is that it is descriptive, captures interactions between different aspects of experience, and does not take a stance regarding which must come first: the thought or the mood or the behaviour or the environmental event or the biological response. Sometimes all happen simultaneously, other times one experience leads to another.",

The lines represent conditioning links, which go in both directions, so mood conditions behaviour and vice versa. The environment (social and physical) affects, and in turn is affected by, each element.

How it works is shown in Fig.3. If one wants to change a mood (often an aim in therapy) one can work on it through ones thoughts, behaviour, environment, or physical state, all of which condition it. In Fig.3 is how we work on thoughts, by using something called the Thought Record. We could use it with behaviour instead - behaving one way (like staying in) might reinforce our depression, but if counterintuitively we are outgoing and cheerful, that can help change our mood. I have known about the cognitive model for some years. Prasad introduced me to it, and I found it was that more than the dharma that really helped me get to grips with 'faulty thinking' and with taking exercise seriously. It is useful because it is explicit about links we know about in buddhism (like between body and mind) but which in the dharma aren't so graphically illustrated as in the cognitive model. You could say as the 'cognitive perspective' it gives people a way to make sense of how things work in experience (in not too different a way to the dharma). In fact the way the model works is applying the principle of pratitva samutpada, to the five 'aspects of life'

Fig.3 Using Cognitive Model with catastrophic thinking

The cognitive model shows how different aspects of our experience condition each other, in this case how thinking "They all hate me" affects our mood (Fig.3a). Our thinking can be extreme (catastrophic) and unbalanced like this. But by remembering the cognitive model, we can remember the link between thought and mood and assess whether our thoughts are balanced or not. We do this by using the Thought Record, a form we can fill in when we are experiencing a difficult mood (Fig.3b). Having brought in more balanced thinking with the Thought Record, our mood improves (Fig.3c)

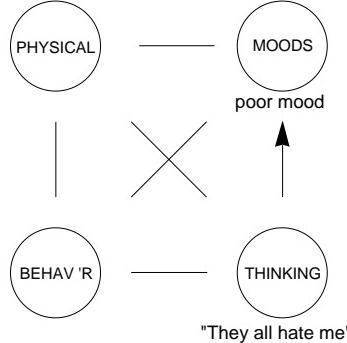
Thought Record

We write down, in this order -

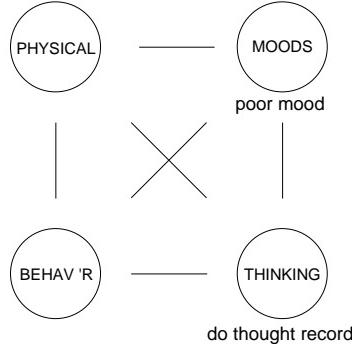
- Our situation
- What mood(s) we are experiencing e.g. worry, anger, sad, lonely, whatever
- We give each a score from 1 - 100.
- We write down a list of 'automatic thoughts' - thoughts that have arisen alongside those mood(s), Examples of the kind of 'catastrophic' thinking that can come up
 - "I'm useless", Nobody loves me", "If I go out I'll get mugged"
- One will be more burning than the others - the 'hot' thought
- We take that and list everything that we can think of as 'evidence for' the thought (called 'socratic questioning').
- Then we list 'evidence against'
- Then in another column we try to come up with a new thought that includes the evidence for and against the old thought - a 'balanced thought'. (which may, instead of "Nobody loves me" now be "There are people who do not seem to like me but X, Y, and Z have always been interested in seeing me and they do seem to enjoy our meetings")
- Considering this new thought on lists ones moods again and gives them new scores from 1 - 100
- Ones scores for negative moods will often have gone down, and for positive moods have gone up, with the newly created 'balanced' thought

Cognitive Therapy

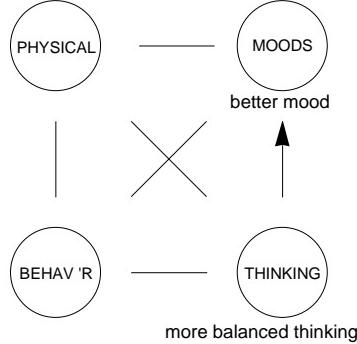
3a thinking affects mood



3b remember thinking affects mood



3c balanced thinking improves mood



◀ conditioning arrow

experience'.

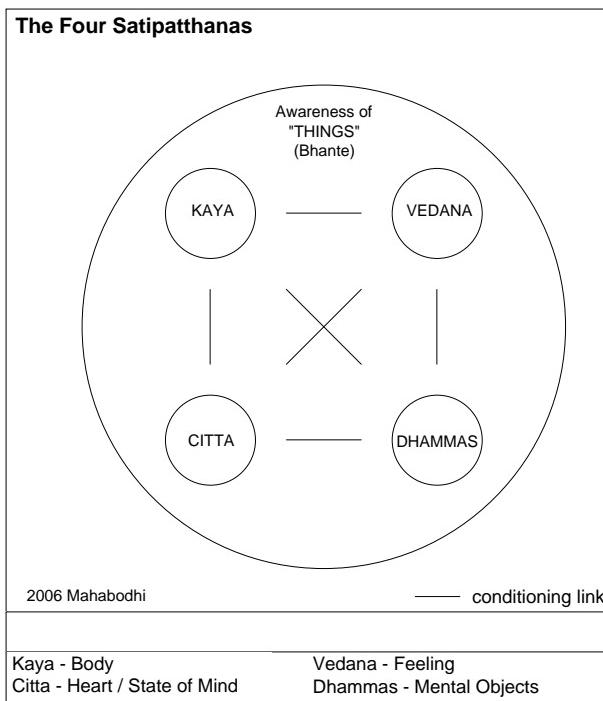
Cognitive Therapy and Buddhism

It is useful. It is also not the dharma. However, there is I think something useful in laying out conditionality in this graphic way. So I thought - what about doing the same thing with the satipatthananas - would that shine some light on the dharma? And it does seem to. Models are a modern invention so its not surprising that In the tradition there are no teachings that link the satipatthananas in a grid, not that I am aware of. So I have done that - just to see what happens - I have called it the 'satipatthana model' (Fig.4)

It was Christine Padesky who helped me see I needed a different model to hers. I had been referring to the cognitive model in my book and developing ideas around it, while writing about the satipatthananas, but being a bit vague about which was which I was vaguely running the cognitive model and the satipatthananas together, but after writing to Christine Padesky I realised I had to get clear about what I was doing. I realised I needed a separate model. This was the 'dharmaic perspective' not the 'cognitive perspective'. So I wrote and told Christine Padesky what I had done. I acknowledged my debt to the cognitive model, but I also told about the cognitive model was enacting a buddhist principle.

After this correspondance I discovered a debate has been going on about buddhism and

Fig. 4 The Satipatthana Model



cognitive therapy. In 2005, the Academy of Cognitive Therapy, its main organisation in the USA, had organised a conference in Sweden. There were all sorts of workshops including ones on buddhism, but the 'showpiece' was Aaron Beck having a public conversation with the Dalai Lama., where he shared a list of bullet points on how cognitive therapy was like buddhism (Apparently after a certain number of points the Dalai Lama said "That's enough points"). So I had 'walked into' this debate.

Cognitive therapy is not a religion. In fact it comes more out of science in that in its journals the efficacy of various treatments are scientifically assessed (including such things as studies of the effects on people of attending Goenka insight retreats). So the question arises for me - what hurdles come up in the quest of cognitive therapists to incorporate buddhist practices, like mindfulness, which they seem to want to do. I haven't got there yet completely with an answer, but using the 'dharma perspective' in the form of the satipatthana model, I think I can point to some issues.

I think generally it is a question of scope. The scope of buddhism is greater. Therapy is a profession. As such it only covers what it 'professes' to cover - it doesn't profess to cover matters of personal ethics for instance. In the place on the satipatthana model where we have ethics, on the cognitive model is only behaviour - a value-neutral term, appropriate to science (for which ethics is a 'personal matter'). Thinking in the cognitive model tends to be ideas about oneself, others and 'the world', more than the penetration of reality that *dhammas* implies. But I think cognitive therapy may help us as buddhists *to the extent that we are not being scientific or rational* in our endeavours. I think that is why it helped me.

Part 3 The Dharmic Perspective

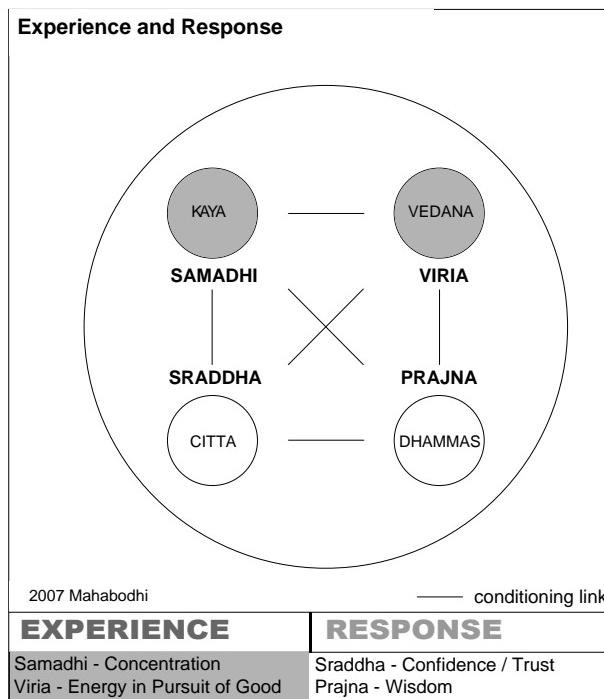
The Satipatthana Model

The model I think can clarify buddhist teachings (see Fig.7). In Fig. 7a we see it explain the *metta bhavana*. Meditation is *citta bhavana*. The central activity is 'contemplating the mind in the mind' - seeing where our present attitude (in particular level of loving kindness) leads to (what its 'future' is). We are developing *citta*. But that is supported by the conditions in the environment (shrine room, sangha), our body (posture, relaxation), our feeling for beings (ethical sensitivity), and how real our views about people are. A warm glow (*vedana*) may be the result of this, conditioned by metta, but different from it. Fig.7b shows how *vedana* is conditioned by the physical, ethical, and mental. Fig.7c shows the bases of the three types of wisdom. Another correlation that can be made is between the four satipatthanas and the five spiritual faculties (Fig.5) - the extra faculty is mindfulness which looks down on the four satipatthanas.

The Five Spiritual Faculties

We can see the way a spiritual faculty like samadhi develops out of contemplation of the body in Fig.6. Concentration is a tangible experience and it develops from a growing ability to work with the tangible in experience (with body, with what is at the focus of ones meditation, etc). It is well known that mindfulness balances samadhi and viria, and if these

Fig. 5 Satipatthana Model and the Five Spiritual Faculties



are both linked to experiences (kaya and vedana), that makes a lot of sense. And if sraddha and prajna are both response (emotive and rational responses) that makes a lot of sense too. Therefore both our experiences and our response have aspects to be balanced (which are balanced by mindfulness - ie. by overall awareness of the four satipatthanas).

Comprehensive Development

Associating the spiritual faculties with the satipatthanas in this way adds weight to the notion that the satipatthanas need to be developed in an even fashion, together. That they are each crucial to a comprehensive development of the person, as Bhante's talk on the five spiritual faculties, 'The Pattern of Buddhist Life and Work' suggests. Unlike hinduism, buddhism does not promote lopsided development. Perhaps in an ethnic religion based around a particular society (as perhaps is true of the West with its compartmentalisations) all the 'bases' will be covered by a number of people, but in religion based on the individual like buddhism, one has self-reliantly to cover all the 'bases' within oneself.

Fig.6 Contemplation of the Body Satipatthana - leading to Concentration

In the Satipatthana Sutta, the practitioner is asked to contemplate each of the satipathanas 'in and of itself'. What this means has been open to debate. Buddhaghosa has one determining the correct object, isolating it, and working on it through its own properties -

'Because there is no contemplating of feeling, consciousness nor mental objects in the body, but just the contemplating of the body only, determination through isolation is set forth by the pointing out of the way of contemplating the body only in the property called the body.' (Papāñcasudani)

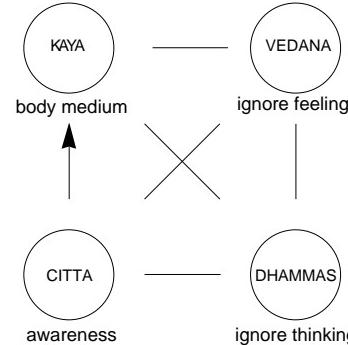
A bit convoluted! I take it to mean - one has to contemplate the body *through* the body sense. Ones awareness has to be in the medium of the body. Fig. 6a illustrates how one isolates ones body (or tangible experience) from how it feels (vedana), from ideas about it (dhammas), even from how it affects ones ethics and awareness (citta). One just observes what is there! That is what the body satipatthana is about, what is *there in our experience* (hence' knowing a long breath as a 'long breath', etc) Only when we have this knowledge established as a foundation of mindfulness, are we able to use it to develop concentration.

Concentration is the management of our awareness *and* our 'tangible base' - which consists of our environment, bodily posture, and what is at our focus of attention. It then supports the other satipathanas. (Fig. 6c)

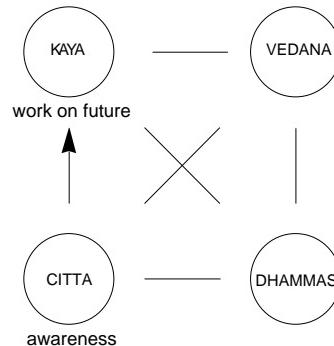
Fig.6b shows how contemplation of the body brings a 'better future' for the body. By dwelling in the body we learn to work with tension, alignment and relaxation to create a 'better future' for it, which we could say is a healthy state of concentration.

Developing Concentration

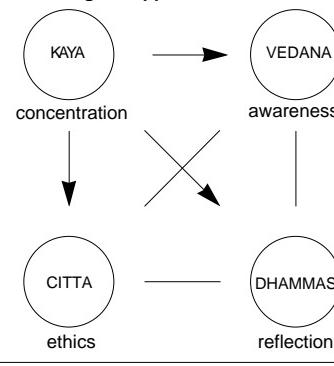
6a contemplate the body in the body



6b take in bodies' future



6c changes supportive to.....



conditioning arrow

Part 4 Phenomenology and the Embodied Mind

Lived Experience matters

There is a book called 'The Embodied Mind - Cognitive Science and Human Experience' (1991) that compares cognitive science on the one hand, and what it calls the mindfulness/awareness tradition (namely buddhism) on the other. One it says is the science of mind and the other that of lived experience. And cognitive science has mainly tried to ignore lived experience.

Its authors (Francisco Varela and others) point to phenomenology as a counter to this. They explore how the mind is embodied, not an abstraction. Analytical philosophers try to examine the nature of mind, while ignoring this embodiment, but according to Heidegger that has consequences of putting experience at a distance, turning it into a 'thing', and being a thing it can be used, exploited, like nature. But phenomenology puts us back, like the body satipatthana, into our experience. We are not abstract - we are 'in the world'. That is not a trivial fact for the experiencer. So what are we to do? Heidegger's answer is, we care. We care about ourselves, and through being able to empathise with our own "being", we empathise with the "being" of all beings. So phenomenology is a *western philosophical foundation for the metta bhavana*. It is also a critique of the lopsidedness of western culture towards utility and rationality, that I think we ought to take note of(see Fig.8).

Fig.7 Using the Satipatthana Model to explore buddhist teachings - Conditionality in Action

- Fig.7a illustrates how metta, which is a state of mind (citta) is supported by -
- concentration - one is grounded in the body and in contact with a tangible meditation object
 - relaxation - in the body
 - being sensitive to (feeling for) the actual experience of living beings (niramisam vedana)
 - a realistic view of living beings (they are centres of experience not objects)

7a conditions for metta

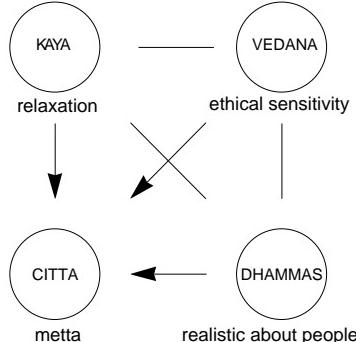


Fig.7b shows the three sources of feeling -

- conditioned by body (kayika vedana)
- worldly or spiritual feeling - conditioned by ones state of mind (ethics)
 - samisam vedana - worldly or carnal feeling, arising from unskillful states (e.g. pain of unsatisfied avarice)
 - niramisam vedana - spiritual feeling, that is conditioned by skillful states (e.g. good conscience)
 - niramisa niramisatara vedana - more spiritual than the spiritual, beyond the 'merely' ethical - that felt on knowing one is released
- cetasika vedana - mental feeling - the 'second dart'. Conditioned by views. Only experienced by unenlightened (often as agonising when things don't go as expected)

7b three types of feeling

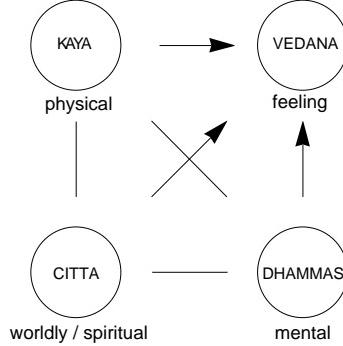


Fig.7c shows the three types of wisdom -

- prajna - 'developmental' wisdom, that which can be cultivated, on the basis of ethics and meditation (both citta related), and through listening, reflecting and meditating
- vidya - intuitive type of wisdom, more 'aesthetically' based
- jnana - direct knowing (you just know!) You directly grasp something in your experience, and you grasp it correctly (The Buddha - "I am enlightened") -as opposed to vijnana which is a dualistic viewing and therefore incorrect (an *unwise* version of jnana)

7c three types of wisdom

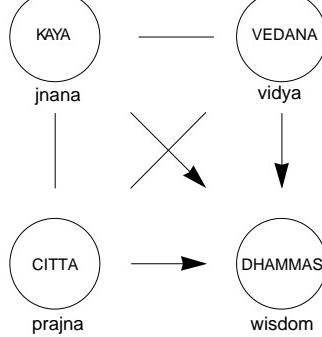


Fig.7d shows the types of spiritual motivation

- faith follower - trusts positive urges in mind
- doctrine follower - trusts clear reasoning
- body witness - trusts physical feelings in body eg. yogi

7d spiritual motivation

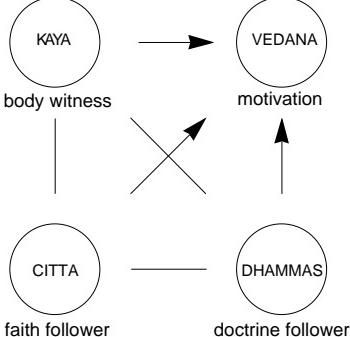


Fig.7e shows how tension can arise

- due to physical, ethical, emotional pain
- due to mental state eg. ill will
- due to negative thoughts eg. fearful imaginings

7e sources of tension

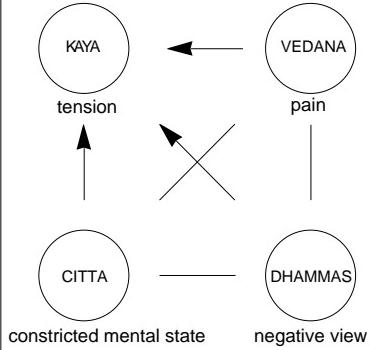


Fig.7f shows three types of faith

- serene faith - from experience of calm
- longing faith - drawn to positive example
- lucid faith - from seeing things clearly

7f three types of faith

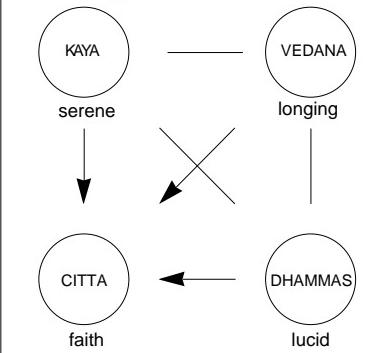


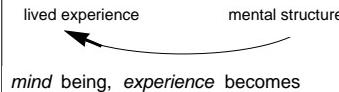
Fig.8 Conditioned Coproduction

The mechanistic view is that brain structure and functioning gives rise to experience (Fig.8a) - the mind as 'machine'. But phenomenology (Fig.8b) emphasises that taking note of our "being" influences our mind (helps us experience what it is to be alive). Through being in touch with experience, we care more about and are warmer to life. But both are true according to Conditioned Coproduction (Fig.8c). Mind and experience condition each other.

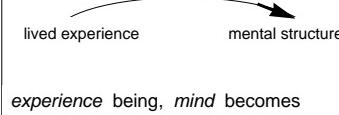
This is still the case in a Buddha, but on a higher level, where their experience is *bodhi* and their 'mental structure' is *jnana* (Fig 8d)

'This being, that becomes'

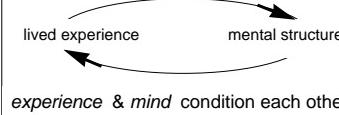
8a 'The 'analytical' view of mind



8b The phenomenological emphasis



8c The buddhist view



8d The buddha's experience



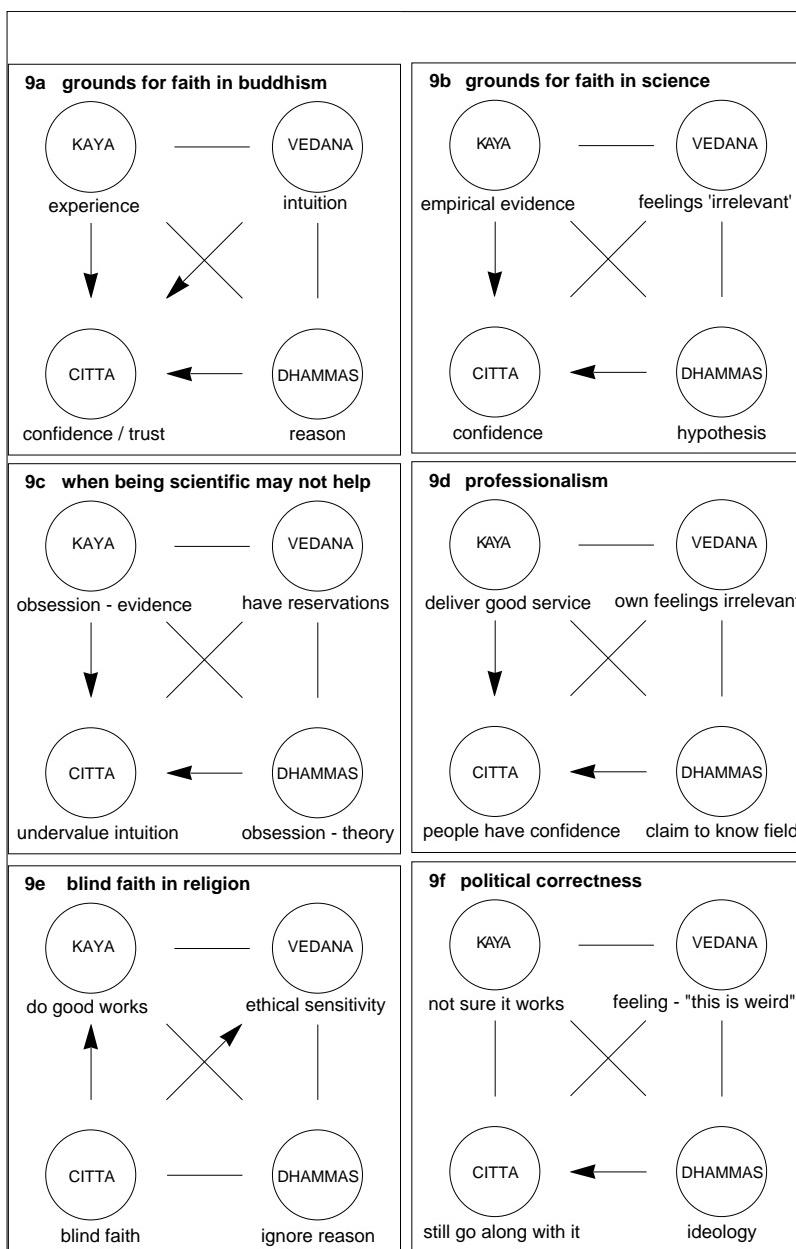
Fig.9 Using the Satipatthana Model to explore buddhism, science, religion, professionalism, and politics

We can use the Sattipatthana model to illustrate a major difference between science and buddhism. It is possible to be a good scientist - coming up with good theories and tangible evidence to back them up, without ones feelings having to 'enter into the equation'. One can be involved in weapons research and not feel obliged to think about the consequences of what one is creating. As a buddhist one would not be able to do this, because buddhism completely covers what it is to be alive (it covers all four satipatthanas, not just three, and that makes science partial). One has to take note of ones intuitions! (Figs.9a-9c).

In the same way, a professional (lawyer, academic, even a car thief!) has knowledge about their field and is skilled to do a good job, but it would be seen as unprofessional to bring their feelings into the equation. So professionalism (in ignoring one satipatthana) too is 'partial' (Fig.9d).

Any religion (Fig.9e) that asks of us to put aside our rational faculty and just accept things on faith is 'partial', despite the ethical sensitivities and good works done by its practitioners (it covers just three satipatthanas).

And some things cover hardly any satipatthanas at all. It is dubious whether political correctness works, it 'feels wrong', but people go along with it probably out of respect for its ideology (Fig. 9f)



Summary

It seems like I have covered a lot of ground. Yet some of the ideas are at root quite simple. In our practice, 'do we cover all the bases?' Or are we being 'partial'? Do we start with knowing our experience, before we rush to do things, or do we ignore it because we 'haven't the time'?

I just want to finish with a few questions for you to take away and reflect on.

Are we personally covering all the satipathanas?

Is there one we tend to miss out on?

How is our concentration, viria? Do we ever really do slow walking?

Is our practice a bit heady? Or are we all faith, all body or all feelings?

If so, can we see a way through, is there anything in this talk to help us address it?

And as a Movement, what have we got well developed and what do we need strengthening? Where are we in relation to the satipatthanas?

What in terms of practice can we contribute to others? And what can we learn from others?

And finally - what framework do you personally use in terms of mindfulness?

More of this material can be seen on my website at www.mahabodhi.org.uk, including an extended version of this talk in pdf format, that more fully includes phenomenology, for those of you who are interested.

Mahabodhi 19 April 2007